

## Posey, Kosmas reject pay raise

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Two

Florida freshmen won't accept the increase: Rep. Suzanne Kosmas, a New Smyrna Democrat, and Rep. Bill Posey, a Rockledge Republican.

Kosmas

said she would donate the difference to a charity, probably the United Way, where she served as board chairwoman in Volusia County.

Earlier

this week, on her first day in office, Kosmas signed on to her first bill, one to eliminate future automatic pay raises.

"Congress

really needs to set an example in these difficult economic times for the people in our districts who are making tough choices and tightening their belts," said Kosmas, whose district includes north Brevard County.

Posey,  
the county's other freshman lawmaker, also plans to accept a salary reflecting last year's pay.

"Mr.  
Posey definitely plans to write a check back to the Treasury or find a designated charity to give the increase to this year," said his press secretary, George Cecala.

Lawmakers  
get a 2.8 percent cost-of-living pay raise each year unless either chamber votes to block the increase. This year's pay hike increased the annual base salary to \$174,000 for most representatives and senators. Lawmakers in leadership positions are paid more but get the same percentage increase.

Not  
all of Florida's congressional delegation plan to return the extra pay.

Rep.  
Connie Mack IV supports cost-of-living raises and probably will use it to pay for the increase in his living expenses due to inflation," said Stephanie DuBois, press secretary for the Fort Myers Republican.

That  
appalls Tom Schatz, president of the taxpayer watchdog group, Council for Citizens Against Government Waste.

"While  
thousands of Americans are facing layoffs and downsizing, Congress should be mortified to accept a raise," he said. "There are a lot of companies and individuals who are just happy to have a job, let alone one that pays \$170,000 a year."

A  
bill introduced during the last session by Rep. Harry Mitchell, an Arizona Democrat, would have prevented the pay raise from taking effect this year. However, the bill failed to get a hearing.

"Congress  
needs to reduce spending and return to fiscal sanity before it gives itself a raise," said Rep. Jeff Miller, the only Florida lawmaker to co-sponsor the

bill. The Chumuckla Republican said he will again donate his pay increase to local charities.

Florida's

two U.S. senators have both supported bills that would freeze congressional salaries, although neither Democrat Bill Nelson nor Republican Mel Martinez plan to return their current pay increase.

Congress has rejected pay raises six times since passing a 1989 law that set up automatic cost-of-living increases. The last time lawmakers voted against such a raise was in 2007, when they fought over whether the minimum wage should be increased before increasing congressional pay. The minimum wage bill passed, and so did the pay increase.